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URGES CHANGE OF METHODS IN TEACHING THE CLASSICS

Greek and Latin Must Be Spoken as Well as Written.

TIME TO MAKE BEGINNING

Real Instruction Will Result in Keen Enjoyment for Student.

BY CHARLES W. BAIN, M. A.

In that brilliant comedy of "The Froge," Aristophanes, with the keenest insight into literary and moral purposes, dissects the poetic compositions of the two mighty poets, Aeschylus and Euripides. The strife is a battle royal between the great poets. Their poems are brought forth, weighed and criticized in every possible manner to find out which of them twain should be carried back to earth to rehabilitate fallen Athens. The final judgment is in favor of Aeschylus, and Lionysus, the god of wine and patron deity of comedy, leads Aeschylus back to earth with a flourish of triumphant trumpets. Honor and glory are to be restored to "violet-crowned Athens." Aristophanes and his party despised Euripides. Aeschylus appealed to the higher instincts, the finer qualities, the reason of the Athenians. His poetry breathed lofty patriotism, and its effect was to raise men to a higher view of life. Euripides, on the other hand, belonged to the new school. He was far in advance of the conservative Aeschylus and Aristophanes. He had foreseen and eagerly seized the more modern ideas, and had incorporated them into his poetry. He forced upon the tragic stage all the lower, humbler means that awake the popular emotions, and so for a time captured the larger audiences, for the lower always finds a wider circle of supporters. As artist, as poet, it is true, Euripides had degraded the great national religion of tragedy, but no poet has more completely fathomed the depths of human emotion than did this great tragedian of 2500 years ago. Later generations have come to a saner view, and now both poets reign supreme in their respective spheres. Now all who read independently and do not form their views and opinions after the dictum of another, acknowledge that both poets are great, however much they may differ in their modes of working and their points of view.

Classical Studies.

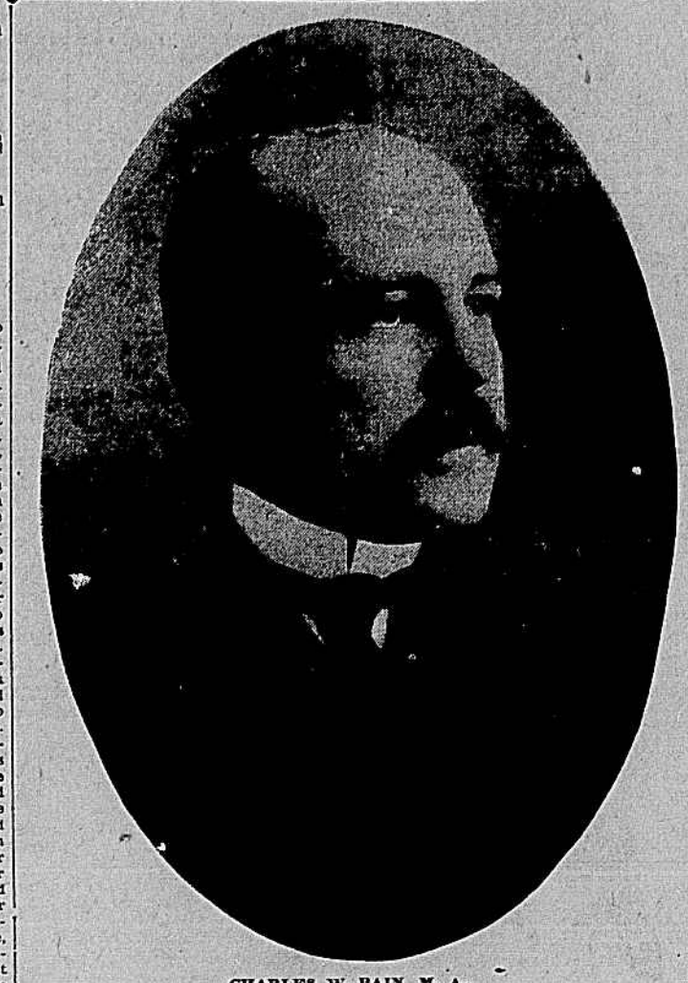
This little story can be very well applied to the condition of the classical studies, which once ruled supreme in the sphere of educational circles. They were the Aeschylus of the schools and colleges, they led to a higher and nobler view of life, and their votaries strove earnestly for the uplift of humanity. The strife between the classics and other studies is not at all of modern origin; indeed, it is much older than many people seem to think. It is the way of men to attack whatever is up on a pinnacle, to lash and cast down whatever is exalted. It is a part of the continuous ebb and flow of life. In the middle ages the syllogistic method was all-conquering, but later ages thought this was not the best method for man, and it has passed into oblivion, for systems of education must change to suit the altered conditions of advancing civilization.

Light was brought into the darkness of the world of the middle ages, when Petrarch was inspired with the intense desire to learn, and busied himself with searching out lost manuscripts of the great Latin writers. It is greatly to be regretted that Petrarch was ignorant of Greek, for the impetus that was given by him to learning and which was turned in favor of Latin, might have saved many a Greek manuscript and preserved to the world some of the great literary treasures that we know existed at that time, while it would have, at the same time, made secure the hold Latin then had on the world. Latin was at that time the language of the world; scholars like Brasmus, of a later date, even despised the modern languages, for Latin continued to be the language of the polite and political world as well as the language of the church.

There was no danger, therefore, that Latin could be hurt, while the fact that Greek was at that time being spread into the western world by the fugitives from Byzantium, much was lost because the scholars of Europe could not understand the language. For this reason it could not be taken up and conserved with the avidity with which Latin was studied and propagated among all nations. Petrarch himself bitterly lamented the fact that he could not read the Homer in the original, which had been presented to him by a famous Byzantine scholar, and was compelled to get him to make a translation into Latin for him. Crude as was this translation, it was enough to show to that appreciative intellect the beauties and glories of the richest and most flexible language ever molded by the lips of man. So keen was his enjoyment that the mighty scholar never ceased to regret that the real Homer was a sealed book for him.

First Fight Started.

It was Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, I believe, who in the early forties took up the cudgels against the classics, not because he despised them, but because he thought that they occupied too large and prominent part in the curricula of our schools and colleges. He it was who gave the impetus to the fight against them, but his purpose was not to displace them entirely, as some of his more ardent and less able followers would have us do, but to make place for the growing sciences, physical and descriptive, as well as abstract. It is a fact often, if not always, overlooked that the true impulse to scientific study arose from the classical schools, for the great German classical scholars first introduced the world to scientific methods of study, which later passed over to the enemy. It is this fact, too, that has had so much to do with the downfall of the classics in the curricula of our modern schools and colleges.



CHARLES W. BAIN, M. A.,
of University of North Carolina.

It altered the entire method of studying language. Language should not be studied as a science till the student is in the latest period of its study. Language is a natural inheritance of us all, even the stupid and dull. The most ignorant, the veriest dullard, even those of weak mentality, can acquire language if it be taken to them in the right way. The weaklings who daily hear a language, even if they cannot read or write, will ultimately acquire some knowledge of it, whether it be native or foreign. All that is necessary for the acquisition of a language is to hear it spoken daily. The most important part in the acquirement of a language is the vocabulary, and in the case of an inflected language the forms. When these are actually possessed, are carried about in the brain, so that they can be used whenever occasion demands, the rest of language is easy. The correct syntax, the finer discriminations, the ornate position of words, the rhetorical combinations, etc., come afterwards and belong to the scientific study of language. We all know that there are thousands of people among us who can speak English, can even read it with intelligence and enjoyment, who cannot decline a noun or conjugate a verb. Our most cultured people, save those who follow the profession of teaching, remember little or nothing of the technicalities of English grammar after they have been out of school ten or fifteen years. It is a notorious fact that people do not learn to speak their native tongue correctly from books, but from home life, from hearing it spoken daily. Without any technical knowledge of English grammar, they can understand anything that is written, can converse on any topic and can enjoy any work. This was the condition of the study of the classics before the period of intense classicism came into vogue. At this time Greek and Latin were spoken languages—Greek by the scholars of the world, Latin by everybody.

The first instruction was by word of mouth, not by the formal and terrible grammar bristling with all sorts of unknown and peculiar shapes and forms, which often brightened the most eager and intelligent. It is true at this period many mistakes were made, many expressions not sanctioned by the writings of Cicero or of Demosthenes and the orators, were in use, mistakes in forms were made, the beloved subjunctive or optative were sometimes not used where strict classicism might demand them; but what were these minor errors compared to the wide reading and keen enjoyment such men got from the classics? We of to-day can correct many of their errors, can point out the correct Ciceronian or Demosthenean expression, can stigmatize this or that phrase as "late" or "unclassic," but can we read and write these beautiful languages with the ease and intelligence that our betters of former days could?

The advent of classicism did away with all this. Every word, every phrase, every construction, must now be made to tally with what Cicero in Latin or Demosthenes in Greek might have written under similar circumstances. The languages were no longer studied, but all time and attention were now given to special authors and to searching out the hidden ways of their diction. A most helpful and stimulating exercise, but not such food as should be fed to the young. It is almost as criminal as to feed a young baby on turkey stuffed with oysters and on plum pudding.

People Revolt.

Even in the church, classicism forced its tyrant hand, and the ban was put on "excommunicare" and the classical expression, "interdicere igni et aqua," was substituted. This was an absurdity. As Horace long ages ago said, the people are masters of language, and no coterie of scholars, however brilliant and powerful, can run counter to their wishes in such matters. The people, therefore, revolted against this sort of strict classicism, and the result was the death blow to spoken Greek and Latin.

With this death came into being the

(Continued on Second Page.)

CONSOLIDATION OF THE SCHOOLS

As Well as the Virginia Method of Transporting Children to School.

BY J. D. EGGLESTON, JR.,
State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

[An address delivered before the Conference for Education in the South, at Little Rock, Arkansas, April 7, 1910.]

One of your Committee on Program has written me that it was the desire of the committee that I should give my experience and observation in regard to the consolidation of schools and the transportation of children.

This, then, is my excuse for the seeming provincialism of discussing this topic from the viewpoint of actual experience in my native State. The literature of the subject is boundless. You are no doubt as familiar with it as I am, but your committee, at least, is interested in an answer to the question, "How do these things work in Virginia?"

By consolidation is meant the grouping of small schools into a central school. The number of our schools consolidated has varied from two to seven. Sometimes these consolidations are effected without public transportation, and sometimes with it. We have no ironclad rule, and will not have one, because children and population and community conditions do not group themselves according to ironclad rules. We take the conditions as we find them, and act accordingly.

When consolidation and transportation were started as definite policies in Virginia five years ago, there were, naturally prophecies of certain failure. I suppose the objections are the same everywhere: that the people will not consent to give up their little schools; that the distances are too great for the children to reach the central schools without great hardship; that the roads are too bad to haul the children; that the children will freeze to death, or at least be frost-bitten while waiting for the wagons or while being transported; and that the cost is too great.

Each of these objections has been successfully met. I shall not attempt to take them up seriatim, but I hope to answer each objection while discussing this subject.

During the fifth year of this policy we have from 150 to 160 wagons running in all sections of the State, and under almost every possible condition. We have routes as long as eight miles, and as short as two and a half miles. We have wagons on good roads and bad roads; on level roads and mountain roads; on rocky roads and sand roads; on macadam roads and red-clay roads. We have transportation wagons of the latest and most modern type, and we have ordinary farm wagons fitted up for the new and precious freight. We have one-horse and two-horse wagons, and in one instance we have a four-horse transportation wagons—or "kid-car," as it is called—which hauls between forty-five and fifty children to school every day. In addition to this, we have in one place in Southwest Virginia the use of a dummy line which hauls a large number of children back and forth each day. The railroad and electric lines are largely used, special rates being allowed the children. In some of the communities where there is consolidation without public transportation, the children ride horse-back or use private vehicles—wagons, buggies and "jumpers." To encourage the children to use these, we built sheltered stalls at the rear of many of the schools grounds.

Last fall I visited a new consolidated school in Halifax county, and at some distance to be read of the schoolhouse I counted twenty-one horses eating their dinner in covered stalls. Five schools were merged into this central school, which is situated on seven acres of land. This is a country school, and the farmers themselves inaugurated the movement for consolidation. To this school, as to most of the other consolidated ones, children will go a long distance, and in so doing will pass by the doors of smaller schools which they formerly attended and which have not yet been closed. Such schools soon starve for lack of attendance. This is one method of closing them.

This is a sufficient answer to the objection that the people will not consent to give up their little schools.

Is consolidation essential to a proper solution of the rural school problem? I believe that it is, and I believe that this is now universally admitted among thinking people. This does not mean, of course, that we will not always have the small school. In fact, so far as we can now see, we will always have one and two-room schools, and a great many of them.

The limitations of time forbid a very extended discussion of the kinds of schools needed in our country districts. In fact, before this intelligent audience such a discussion does not seem to be necessary. Most of us agree that the problem we have not solved, but must solve, is how to make the country school fit country life. Only that schools fulfils its mission which reaches out and touches intelligently, sympathetically, constantly and coensciously every social and economic interest that concerns its community.

And so when I speak of the consolidated school in Virginia, I mean a grouping, at some central point, of small schools into a larger school for the purpose of working out this great problem. This consolidation, therefore, means much more than the mere grouping of small schools under one roof; it means much more than the usual grading of the children according to their capacities and advancement in the study of books.

Its deeper and more significant meaning may be found in the fact that it makes possible a more dignified and beautiful structure, which in itself enhances the respect of the community for the school; that it enables larger playgrounds to be provided, and healthy, interesting and properly directed games to be inaugurated for the children and youth of the community; that it makes possible the school-garden and the agricultural plot and manual training and domestic science; that it makes easier the study of the economic interests of the community by teaching the arithmetic, physics, chemistry, geography, history, language and composition that look towards, and not away from, the farm; that it makes possible the formation of children's societies, of co-operative industries for the women and men, and of citizens' leagues for the continued oversight and improvement of the school; that, by bringing together larger groups of children and larger groups of citizens, it tends to socialize the isolated districts by taking the children and their parents out of their small and narrow environments, and giving them an enlarged social vision and contact; it therefore not only makes the boy and girl dissatisfied with a deficient or uninviting environment, but it takes the next logical and necessary step of giving the boy and girl both the capacity and the desire to return to that environment and improve it. It tends to minimize the influence of the anti-social patron, who, unless he can control the small school, may threaten to break it up by withdrawing his patronage—and it therefore tends to maximize the community life as against the individual.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

PROPER CO-ORDINATION OF WORK IS ONE GREAT EDUCATIONAL NEED

R. E. BLACKWELL,
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Recognition of Function of Different Kinds of School Suggested.

MISTAKE MADE AFTER WAR

Place in State for University Training School and High School.

One of the greatest needs in the educational system of Virginia and in the other Southern States is the proper co-ordination of the work of the various schools and a proper recognition of the function or the different kinds of schools. A disastrous mistake that was made after the war was the policy adopted by the higher institutions of learning of taking students before they had finished their academy course. This tended to break down the old university schools, and made it almost impossible to establish high schools. A wise policy would have preserved and fostered schools of the type represented by Gordon McCabe's university school. Vanderbilt University, by pursuing the right policy, has built up a number of such training schools; in Virginia we destroyed most of those we already had.

The loss will long be felt; for, however great the value of the public high school, there is a work to be done for a certain class of boys, and perhaps for all boys at a certain stage of their development, that cannot be done except by the old university schools. No better agency for the training of the minds of boys and the development of their characters has yet been discovered. The high schools, with their lady teachers and the presence of such a predominance of girls in the classes, as essential as these schools are in our educational system, will never be the educational force for the development of a certain virile type of boys that the university school was.

Unfortunately few of these schools were incorporated and endowed, and so they had little chance of surviving when the colleges and universities entered into competition with them.

It may not yet be too late to save this class of school to the State, and it is to be hoped that some large-minded Virginians will arise who will endow such schools as Massachusetts has still, and which Virginia must have if we are going to make the most of our people by means of education and make such people as the Virginia schools made in the past.

It is a great mistake to think that there is no room for the university training school if we are to have the public high schools. I yield to no one in my admiration of the public high school, but I know its limitations. There is room for both kinds of schools. I need not undertake to prove this, but I would only call attention to the fact that Massachusetts, which has the very best high schools in the country, and such as Virginia is not likely to have for a quarter of a century, has nevertheless the largest number of the very finest type of privately supported academies for the training of boys. No friends, therefore, of Southern education will desire to see a policy pursued by which we shall be robbed of these academies in which the men who made Virginia in olden times were nurtured, while the North is amply provided with schools that perform a similar function with our university schools. The work of educating a people for life is an enormous task, and the State should encourage its citizens to foster and endow all tried means for that purpose. Hence, I say that co-operation and recognition of the functions of various types of school is one of the greatest needs in the South to-day. The success of individual institutions is a small matter compared with the good of the whole people, and those heads of institutions who pursue a policy which tends to break down any one kind of school which is essential to the good of the whole take a fearful responsibility upon themselves.

The recently appointed Educational Commission will, it is hoped, do much in Virginia towards introducing the wiser policy by which the function of each kind of school now existing may be sharply defined and our people be made to see that there is work enough for each kind. This will tend to cause such a wholesale public sentiment that the individual school will lose caste if it does not keep to its own legitimate work and if it does not carefully enforce entrance requirements which will insure its doing the work which is marked out for it and which it claims to do.

Even in schools supported by State taxes we now find the policy pursued which has in the past done so much harm in the South. The State gives money to institutions which claim to be devoted to the higher learning, and much of that money is used in teaching boys and girls who should be in the local high schools or in academies. I know well the arguments by which these institutions justify themselves. It is said that the pupils have no high schools at their homes; but the fact the most influential men in the community can send their children off to an institution of higher learning and but the most ambitious parents and have them taught the high school branches, these tend to prevent the local high school from being established, whereas, if these students were not allowed to enter the colleges and normal institutes their influential parents would be interested in establishing a high school, and the high school would be soon established. But it is claimed that some communities could not possibly establish high schools. Then let such students who want to enter colleges and normal institutes be sent to neighboring high schools or academies, where the expenses would certainly be no greater than in a college or normal institute. Thus the latter class of school could devote itself to doing the kind of work that it sets out to do, and does